



King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1080/14682745.2019.1615894](https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2019.1615894)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Patalano, A. (2021). 'The silent fight': submarine rearmament and the origins of Japan's military engagement with the Cold War, 1955–76. *Cold War History*, 21(1), 91–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2019.1615894>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

**‘The Silent Fight’:
Submarine Rearmament and the Origins of Japan’s Military Engagement with the Cold War,
1955-1976¹**

Abstract: This paper examines new Japanese primary source materials to reassess the significance of Japanese rearmament during the early stages of the Cold War in two ways. First, the paper shows how, in the area of submarine development, the post-war navy approached rearmament as an opportunity to address wartime failures with the support and professional mentorship of the US Navy. Second, whilst submarines were considered as outside the scope of Japanese defence posture, the navy had a crucial agency role in shaping how this branch of naval warfare was integrated into the country’s strategy with significant consequences for the later stages of the Cold War.

Keywords: Japanese Rearmament, Cold War Submarine Warfare, Military Agency, Japanese strategy, Sea-lanes defence

Introduction

The narrative of Japan in the Cold War before the adoption of the National Defence Programme Outline (NDPO) in 1976 is one devoid of a military dimension. Politically and economically, the literature has long explored how – trade issues and public sensitivities notwithstanding – consecutive early post-war leaders committed Japan to the security treaty with the United States.² The treaty was instrumental in enabling Japanese leaders to focus on economic recovery as a way to regain international prestige and autonomy.³ For the United States, as the Cold War turned hot in Korea, a politically stable and economically strong Japan was central to the development of a ‘hub and spokes’ system of alliances set in motion by the San Francisco system in 1952.⁴ By 1957, the Japanese people clearly stood ‘with the

¹ **Note on the phonetic transcription of Japanese words and names:** In the text, Japanese names are reported with family names preceding first names.

² Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), chapters IX-XI; Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan Since the Occupation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapters 7-8; John Welfield, *Empire in Eclipse: Japan in the Postwar American Alliance System* (London: Bloomsbury, 1988), chapters 4, 6; John Swenson-Wright, *Unequal Allies? United States Security and Alliance Policy Toward Japan, 1945-1960* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), chapter 5; Bruce Cumings, ‘Japan and the Asian Periphery’, in Melvyn P. Leffler, David S. Painter (eds.), *Origins of the Cold War. An International History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 215-235; Bruce Cumings, ‘Japan’s Position in the World System’, in Andrew Gordon (ed.), *Postwar Japan as History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 34-63. Naoko Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Fintan Hoey, *Satō, America and the Cold War: US-Japanese Relations, 1964-1972* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). On the role of authoritative Japanese figures in shaping Japan’s early post-war security relations with the United States, cf. Peter Mauch, *Sailor Diplomat: Nomura Kichisaburō and the Japanese American-War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 225-246.

³ Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (New York: Public Affairs TM, 2007), 110-114.

⁴ Akira Iriye, *The Cold War in Asia: A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall International, 1974), 174-175; Michael J. Green, *By More Than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific since 1783* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 278-284.

United States and the western world for their common safety’ as they considered themselves to belong ‘to the free nations’ confronting the Soviet Union.⁵ Progressively, Japanese diplomacy gained greater independence but the revision of the security treaty in 1960 confirmed that the country remained a likeminded security partner.⁶ In this respect, one recent study considered Japan as a ‘Cold War state’ in which the interplay of structural dynamics and alliance politics shaped national security.⁷

The substantive nature of political and economic assessments of the pre-1976 period stands in contrast with those on the Japanese military engagement with the Cold War. In the literature, Japanese leaders in the 1950s and 1960s are not against military support to the United States. They had, nonetheless, a lukewarm attitude towards their country’s rearmament.⁸ Their attitudes were compounded by the lack of a genuine American desire for a rearmament that could destabilise the country with the spectre of a military takeover and, by association, the East Asian region.⁹ Thus, Japanese elites opted for a predominantly indirect military role allowing the use of the archipelago as a logistical hub for operations in Korea and Vietnam and by offering bases to host American forces.¹⁰ In 1973, the homeporting of the *USS Midway* in Yokosuka renewed the Japanese commitment to strengthen the credibility of its ally’s regional presence.¹¹ Against this background, a handful of studies have started to uncover episodes of early post-war Japanese military activities such as the demining operations off the Korean coast in 1950 which stand outside the narrative provided by current interpretations.¹²

In the existing narrative, the first significant changes in the Japanese defence posture took place in the mid-1970s. The need to react to the announcement of the Guam doctrine in 1969, the oil shocks of 1973, combined with the emergence of Nakasone Yasuhiro as the first senior politician to serve as Director

⁵ ‘Memorandum of a Conversation Between Secretary of State Dulles and Prime Minister Kishi’, Washington, 20 June 1957, in Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Volume XXIII, Part 1: Japan* (Washington, DC: E-book, 2016).

⁶ Takuya Sasaki and Hiroshi Nakanishi, ‘The 1950s: Pax Americana and Japan’s Postwar Resurgence’, in Makoto Iokibe (ed.), *The History of US-Japan Relations: From Perry to the Present* (Trans. By Tosh Minohara, Singapore: Palgrave 2017), 127-148.

⁷ Jennifer M. Miller, ‘The Struggle to Rearm Japan: Negotiating the Cold War State in US-Japanese Relations’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 46, 2011:1, 82-108.

⁸ Schaller, *Altered States*, op. cit., 143-162; Welfield, *Empire in Eclipse*, op. cit., 78-87; Swenson-Wright, *Unequal Allies*, op. cit., 194-195.

⁹ LaFeber, *The Clash*, op. cit., 335-356; Pyle, *Japan Rising*, op. cit., 320-321; Schaller, *Altered States*, op. cit., 229-231. Liang Pan, ‘Whither Japan’s Military Potential? The Nixon Administration’s Stance on Japanese Defense Power’, *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 31, 2007:1, 111-142.

¹⁰ Welfield, *Empire in Eclipse*, op. cit., chapter 9; LaFeber, *The Clash*, op. cit., 283-295, 338-348. Makoto Iokibe and Takuya Sasaki, ‘The 1960s: Japan’s Economic Rise and the Maturing of the Partnership’, in Iokibe (ed.), *The History of US-Japan Relations*, op. cit., 163-168.

¹¹ Tetsuo Kotani, ‘Presence and Credibility: Homeporting the *USS Midway* at Yokosuka’, *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol.15, 2008, 51-82.

¹² James E. Auer, *Postwar Rearmament of Japanese Maritime Forces, 1945-71* (Boulder, CO: Preager, 1973); Alessio Patalano, ‘Reclaiming the Trident: Japanese Minesweeping Operations in the Korean War and the Post-war Rearmament Process, 1950-1952’, *Quaderno 2014: Naval History – La SISMI ricorda Alberto Santoni* (Rome, IT: Società Italiana di Storia Militare, 2014), 695- 710; NHK Special Selection, *Kaijōjietai wa Koushite Umareta* (海上自衛隊はこうして生まれた - The Way The Maritime Self-Defence Force Was Born, Tokyo: Nihon Housou Shuppan Kyokai, 2003); Kaijō jietai Soukai Butai, *Nihon no Soukaishi: Chōsen Dōran Tokubetsu Sōkaishi* (日本の掃海史：朝鮮動乱特別掃海史 – The History of Japanese Minesweeping: Special Minesweeping Operations in Unsettled Korea, Tokyo: Kaijō jietai, Kaibakuryōu Kambu Boueibuhen, 2009); Yoshihide Soeya and Robert D. Eldridge, ‘The 1070s: Stresses on the Relationship’, in Iokibe (ed.), *The History of US-Japan Relations*, op. cit., 181-184.

General of the Japan Defence Agency (JDA) in 1970, contributed to raise the prospect of a more ‘independent’ Japanese military posture.¹³ By the mid-1970s, the ensemble of these factors had ignited a debate that culminated with the adoption of the NDPO. The document penned the strategy underwriting the defence build-up of Japan’s more pronounced military posture for the rest of the Cold War.¹⁴

The paper aims to review this narrative. It brings together a variety of new primary source materials to propose a more nuanced distinction between the scope of early Japanese rearmament and its impact on Japan’s military role in the Cold War. In fact, the paper shows how scholarship has underappreciated both the self-defence forces’ agency in shaping the Japanese military role in the Cold War and the fact that rearmament was carried out within the context of a debate over strategy that well precedes the events of the 1970s. Japanese submarine rearmament shows that as soon as the new navy, the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF), acquired a first boat, its leadership committed to debating options to fit the country’s political circumstances and meet its security needs against a looming Soviet submarine threat. In the JMSDF efforts to develop a Japanese naval strategy in the late 1950s and 1960s, submarines were to play a central role. They would allow the fleet to ‘monitor’ and, if needed, ‘bottle up’ a fast growing Soviet submarine force within the confines of the Sea of Japan. The paper focuses on the submarine force to make this point because of its significance in the Japanese strategy of containment of Soviet forces in the subsequent post-1976 period.¹⁵ Crucially, the paper shows how that the submarine force that successfully took on the responsibilities outlined in the NDPO was the result of a strategy developed over the previous two decades.

In so doing, the paper seeks also to fill a gap in our understanding of Japan’s Cold War, presenting an alternative view to the rearmament process. For the JMSDF, the Japanese government attitude towards rearmament was not merely a sign of lack of commitment, nor merely a response to meet American pressures. The early Cold War rearmament process represented an opportunity. Away from public attention, the navy engaged with the Soviet challenge; it sought to test different types of platforms and develop a relevant strategy. As a result, it fought to secure adequate funding to procure capabilities and establish a professional force. It subsequently continued to enhance this effort by testing different types of boats, by refining designs, and developing adequate doctrines. Crucially, at a time in which submarines

¹³ LaFeber, *The Clash*, op. cit., 352-358; Yukinori Komine, ‘Whither a “Resurgent Japan”: The Nixon Doctrine and Japan’s Defense Buildup, 1969-1976’, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 16, 2014: 3, 88-128; Fintan Hoey, ‘The Nixon Doctrine and Nakasone Yasuhiro’s Unsuccessful Challenge to Japan’s Defense Policy, 1969-1971’, *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 19, 2012:1, 52-74; Green, *By More Than Providence*, op. cit., 336-345.

¹⁴ Komine, ‘Whither a Resurgent Japan’, op. cit., 117-124; Alessio Patalano, *Post-war Japan as a Sea Power: Imperial Legacy, Wartime Experience and the Making of a Navy* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 102-108.

¹⁵ Alessio Patalano, ‘Shielding the “Hot Gates”: Submarine Warfare and Japanese Naval Strategy in the Cold War and Beyond (1976-2006)’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 31, 2008:6, 859-895.

were considered as outside the scope of the country's defence posture, the navy clearly committed to dedicate resources to integrate this branch of naval warfare into its strategy of Soviet containment. By the second half of the 1960s, the JMSDF's concept of operations for its submarine force was endorsed within the Japan Defence Agency (JDA) and informed its approach to argue the case for maritime defence in the Diet. During the period under examination, parliamentary debates scrutinised submarines procurement, but the JMSDF defined the terms of capabilities and posture, notably dismissing the procurement of nuclear-powered submarines.

The paper first provides an overview of the debate over the priorities for naval defence within the context of a national security strategy during the entire period under examination. The first section shows how the JMSDF developed the case for straits defence missions for its submarines and how it maintained clear control over the development of both submarine capabilities and the definition of missions. The subsequent sections offer an in-depth examination of how the service developed its understanding of both aspects of submarine development before drawing some general conclusions. In examining submarine rearmament, this paper contributes to the literature on the Cold War expanding the scope of the scholarly agenda on Japan, centred on the political and economic dimensions of the security relationship with the United States. In this regard, the paper looks at how the United States mentored and supported submarine rearmament; yet, the success of this support depended on the JMSDF. Throughout their ties with US naval counterparts, Japanese uniformed officers were active agents in developing the country's engagement with the Cold War at sea in the Western Pacific.¹⁶ The alliance set the context for Japanese submarine rearmament, but Japanese naval authorities defined the country's military role at sea and submarine capabilities in it. In so doing, this paper shows how research in the military dimension of Japan's early Cold War has non-negligible implications in the comprehension of Tokyo's subsequent defence policy as well as in our understanding of the role of junior partners in managing successful ties.

1. Submarines and Japanese Early Cold War Strategy: An Overview of the Rearmament Process

In the early 1950s, Japanese defence establishment with wartime experience considered submarines to be a mature and effective tool of war and one that had proved to have devastating consequences for the country's economy. Post-war Japanese assessments argued that in the absence of the decisive battle, the Japanese failure to full appreciate the role of submarines in modern naval warfare doomed the country's

¹⁶ Melvyn P. Leffler, 'Bringing it Together: The Parts and the Whole', in Odd Arne Westad, *Reviewing the Cold War. Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* London, Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), 54.

war at sea and exposed the country's sea-lanes to a relentless Allied offensive.¹⁷ American statistical data reinforced such views. In the Pacific, American submarines sunk 55% of the total of Japanese shipping at the cost of fifty submarines and 3,500 men lost.¹⁸ The war of the *Maru*, as the campaign against shipping came to be known after the generic designation for Japanese merchant vessels, was later considered by the United States Strategic Bombing Survey as 'perhaps the most decisive single factor in the collapse of the Japanese economy and logistic support of Japanese military and naval power'.¹⁹

It is no coincidence therefore that the early post-war military leadership was keen to address the question of submarines in the national defence posture to avoid past mistakes. In August 1952, the Japanese government set up the Systems Investigative Committee, a research group tasked to explore options for future defence requirements. The Committee's approach to Japan's naval defence pro-actively engaged the war-time problem of securing the continued flow of vital primary resources to the archipelago. The report specifically concluded that sea-lanes defence was to be considered one of the core objectives of national security. Maritime convoying and ASW capabilities to counter submarine threats to shipping – including surface vessels, aircraft, and submarines – were to constitute the guiding principles of the navy's procurement policy and fleet structure, followed by the acquisition of the necessary capabilities to prevent foreign aggression against Japanese territory.²⁰

This plan was the first post-war official assessment in which the security dimension of Japanese economic dependence on maritime trade was factored into a basic 'maritime' strategy.²¹ In 1953, the Japanese approach to naval matters played to the strengths of American perceptions for Japan's role in meeting the challenge of the evolving regional military balance. In October 1953, the Assistant Secretary of Defence Frank Nash described Japan as East Asia's 'most important prize', one that was under 'serious' Soviet (and Chinese) military threats with requirements for ASW and Mine Warfare (MIW) missions.²² In particular, these views took into considerations earlier intelligence assessments of Soviet naval strength including some 34 destroyers and 81 submarines.²³ Nonetheless, Japanese officials, had more

¹⁷ Atsushi Oi, 'Why Japan's Antisubmarine Warfare Failed' in David C. Evans, *The Japanese Navy in World War II*, 385-414; Carl Boyd, 'American naval Intelligence of Japanese Submarine Operations Early in the Pacific War', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 53, 1989:2, 170-172. Also, Euan Graham, *Japan's Sea Lane Security, 1940-2004. A Matter of Life or Death?* (The Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series, New York, Abington, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 71-76.

¹⁸ Clay Blair Jr., *Silent Victory: The US Submarine War against Japan* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 878-879.

¹⁹ Quoted in Blair, *Silent Victory*, 879.

²⁰ James E. Auer, *The Post-war Rearmament of Japanese Maritime Forces, 1945-1971* (New York, Washington, London: Praeger, 1973), 154.

²¹ Graham, *Japan's Sea Lane Security*, 100.

²² 'Telegram: The Secretary of State to the embassy in Japan', Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Volume XIV, China and Japan - Part 2* (Washington, DC: eBooks, 2016).

²³ Central Intelligence Agency, 'Estimate of Soviet Probable Intentions Toward Japan', 1951, retrieved at Central Intelligence Agency Library, Electronic Reading Room, available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/>.

conservative ambitions aiming for just for two coastal submarines for ASW training.²⁴ By December 1953, Ambassador John M. Allison concurred that Japanese defence plans should include two submarines.²⁵ The Joint Chiefs of Staff shortly thereafter confirmed that the United States had one submarine that could be offered on loan to favour immediate initial training.²⁶ Three months later, as the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement was signed, Washington confirmed its intention to loan a submarine.²⁷

In the early 1950s, the navy's wishes to acquire submarines to develop its ASW force found, however, political opposition both within and outside Japan. The natural operational environment of a submarine, its stealth, its tactical employment, stood at odds with the views of Japanese left-wing political circles, something civilians in the JDA were painfully aware of.²⁸ The acquisition of such combat capability represented – to the understanding of left-leaning politicians – a direct violation of Article 9 of the constitution on the possession of 'war potential'. Such an opposition was not the result of an underappreciation of the Soviet threat, especially of the submarine challenge. In fact, parties across the political spectrum in Japan were conscious of the security challenge created by Soviet naval capabilities. Diet members from political parties on the left, however, did not predicate rearmament and a close partnership with the United States.²⁹ Instead, they supported the country's 'unarmed neutralism'.³⁰

Outside of Japan, Australian officials too voiced concerns about the prospect of the JMSDF acquiring submarine capabilities. In spring 1954, their opposition included the idea of loaning submarines to Japan 'even for training in antisubmarine warfare'.³¹ By July of the same year, the Australian Ambassador in Washington showed a more accommodating attitude since his government understood the need for ASW training to involve a 'target submarine'. Still, this did not 'imply that Australia would necessarily approve

²⁴ 'Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Japanese Finance and Trade Section, Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Cronk)', Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Volume XIV, China and Japan - Part 2* (Washington, DC: eBooks, 2016).

²⁵ 'Telegram: The Ambassador in Japan (Allison) to the Department of State', Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Volume XIV, China and Japan - Part 2* (Washington, DC: eBooks, 2016).

²⁶ 'Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense', Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Volume XIV, China and Japan - Part 2* (Washington, DC: eBooks, 2016).

²⁷ 'Memorandum by the Acting Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (McClurkin) to Frederick E. Nolting, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs', Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Volume XIV, China and Japan - Part 2* (Washington, DC: eBooks, 2016).

²⁸ Chris Kevork, 'The Revitalisation of Japan's Submarine Industry: From Defeat to *Oyashio*', *NIDS Journal of Defense and Security*, No.14, 2013, 85-86. On the evolution of the submarine in naval warfare, Karl Lautenschläger, 'The Submarine in Naval Warfare, 1901-2001', *International Security*, Vol. 11, 1986-87:3, 94-140.

²⁹ Eitan Oren, 'Military Threat Perception in Post-war Japan: The Soviet Union, China, and North Korea', unpublished PhD thesis, the University of Tokyo (2017), chapter 4.

³⁰ Saheki Kiichi, 'The Rebuilding of Japan's Self-Defence Force', *Japan Quarterly*, Vol. 4, 1957:1, 107-109.

³¹ Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Japanese Finance and Trade Section, Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Cronk)', Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Volume XIV, China and Japan - Part 2* (Washington, DC: eBooks, 2016).

provision to the Japanese of submarines for combat purposes'.³² As a result of the controversy over submarine procurement, in official budget planning documents the first submarines were procured as 'submergible fast-moving targets'³³ for the training of surface ASW vessels.³⁴ The chosen nomenclature was not unique to Japan since, for example, the Italian Navy initially loaned submarines from the United States by using a similar definition.³⁵ Crucially though the technical definition implied their exclusive use for training in ASW operations.

In the mid-1950s, naval rearmament has to be understood in the context of a political debate in which the build-up of naval capabilities was not of immediate concern. From a strategic point of view, the next war between the two superpowers was expected to be in all probability a nuclear war. In it, the new Japanese navy would have little or no role to play.³⁶ Indeed, similar forecasts were underpinning the debate on the US Navy's Cold War missions in Washington.³⁷ On the other hand, in the less likely case of a prolonged conventional conflict, Japan would rely heavily on the American naval operations keeping sea-lanes open.³⁸ For the Japanese government, ground and air forces were, as a result, a higher priority. Domestically, investments in these capabilities showed to the Japanese people the government's commitment in accelerating the withdrawal of US troops stationed in Japan. Diplomatically, they represented a tangible sign of Japan's commitment to the security partnership with the United States with no real strategic role beyond the country's borders.³⁹

In 1956, the government approved a relatively modest force goal for the navy in the first Defence Build-up Plan.⁴⁰ The plan effectively relegated naval matters to a secondary role, with the JMSDF's sole mission consisting of a strict 'defence from direct aggression of the mainland'.⁴¹ Within this context, the JMSDF prioritised the procurement of ASW capabilities, especially helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, and submarines were accordingly procured as targets for the ASW surface component.⁴² Yet, in the same year, the Director General of the JDA did not miss the opportunity to explain the function of the

³² 'The Australian Ambassador (Spender) to the Secretary of State', Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Volume XIV, China and Japan - Part 2* (Washington, DC: eBooks, 2016).

³³ *Suichū kōsoku hyōteki* (水中高速標的)

³⁴ Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: Oyashio Gata' (海上自衛隊の国産潜水艦全タイプ：おやしお型 - All types of JMSDF's Domestic Built Submarines: The Oyashio Class), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 1997:5, 78.

³⁵ Author's interview with senior Italian Naval submarine officer, Italian Navy Submarine Training Centre, Taranto, 19 May 2009.

³⁶ Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSF), *Kaijōjietai Gojū Nenshi* (海上自衛隊五十年史 - JMSDF's Fifty Year History, Tokyo, 2003), 26.

³⁷ George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Seapower. The US Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 333.

³⁸ JMSDF, *Kaijōjietai Gojū Nenshi*, 26. Also, Baer, *One Hundred Years of Seapower*, 332.

³⁹ William J. Sebald to Secretary of State, 28 January 1955, and MAAG-J to Secretary of State, 18 March 1955 in Osamu Ishii, Naoki Ono, eds., *Documents on the United States Policy towards Japan. Documents related to Diplomatic and Military Matters, Volume 2* (Tokyo: Kashiwashobo, 1999), 27, 95.

⁴⁰ *Bōei Ryoku Seibi Keikaku* (防衛力整備計画). These plans were known as *Jibō* (次防).

⁴¹ *Hondohe no Cyokusetsu Shinryakuni Taisuru Kaijō Bōei* (本土への直接侵略に対する海上防衛).

⁴² JMSDF, *Kaijōjietai Gojū Nenshi*, 27-28.

submarine in ASW training in a way that linked this capability to the broader vulnerability of Japanese shipping:

‘Japan is a nation surrounded by seas, with twenty percent of its food being imported, and in an emergency it would be important to protect our shipping. In a foreign attack on Japan, the severing of Japan’s supply routes would be a concern and to that end we need to conduct training. As part of that training, we require an undersea target similar to a submarine’.⁴³

Initial modest allocations to the JMSDF did not mean that the merits of a naval strategy that focused on sea-lanes defence was not debated or that they were without political support. In it, the debate over whether submarines should be more than just ASW training platforms had considerable significance. In March 1958, Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke himself highlighted in the Diet the potentially devastating effects of the Soviet submarine threat to Japanese sea-lanes. Drawing upon his recollections of wartime ‘food shortage’,⁴⁴ he directed the JDA Director General to continue investigating how Japanese defence posture could best address the threat from Soviet submarines.⁴⁵ As the debate of Japanese posture unfolded, Tsuji Masanobu, a Diet member and former army officer, noted that the Soviet submarine force in the Pacific was much larger than the US Navy’s, and that Japan needed to fill in the numerical gap. As he pointed out, ‘if the underwater threat is the most dangerous, why don’t we spend more on submarines?’⁴⁶ In particular, he wished for Japan to invest in research and development (R&D) of better engines and batteries to develop a fleet that would be suited to Japan’s specific geostrategic needs, not merely to seek to reproduce a US Navy on a small scale.⁴⁷

In 1960, as the security treaty was confirmed as a pillar of Japanese security posture, debates in the House of Representatives Budget Committee pointed to a request for the JMSDF and the JDA to clarify the main objectives for the Japanese submarine force. Submarines had been previously procured for ASW training, but as the circumstances of Japanese security were evolving, and the Soviet submarine threat was gaining significance, members of the committee wanted to understand whether Japanese submarines were to be used in a potential conflict with the Soviet Union to ensure that sea channels were not closed off, and if submarines were to be deployed to protect convoys and how far from national shores.⁴⁸ JDA Director General Akagi Munenori did not exclude the possibility for submarines to be confined in Japanese coastal

⁴³ Quoted in Chris Kevork, ‘The Revitalisation of Japan’s Submarine Industry: From Defeat to *Oyashio*’, *NIDS Journal of Defense and Security*, No.14, 2013, 86.

⁴⁴ Shokuryō Mondai (食糧問題).

⁴⁵ National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Cabinet Committee, 13 March 1958. Available at <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/>.

⁴⁶ National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Cabinet Committee, 07 March 1958.

⁴⁷ Ibid..

⁴⁸ National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Budget Committee, 06 February 1960.

waters since a focus around Japan's main straits (Soya, Tsugaru and Tsushima) promised to deliver greater operational effectiveness.⁴⁹ In subsequent months, Akagi continued to explain that training with the US Navy as well as continued domestic support for R&D in submarine-related technology were key factors in the Japanese future ability to refine doctrines, capabilities, and concept of operations.⁵⁰ In Japanese domestic debate over defence matters, submarines were starting to take an embryonic role as tactically offensive platforms in an overall defensive naval posture.

Throughout the remainder of the 1960s, the policy debate on Japanese maritime strategy continued to revolve around the question of how technological and operational issues were going to inform defence posture. As the Soviet and American navies started to invest more heavily in nuclear-powered submarines, Diet members put pressure on the JDA to provide more in-depth information as to whether Japan should – and indeed could, especially after the adoption of the three non-nuclear principle in 1967 (non-possessing, non-producing and non-introducing nuclear weapons) – pursue similar capabilities.⁵¹ Concurrently, questions were asked about the nature and extent of ASW tactical training with the US Navy to ascertain its compatibility with the constitution. Addressing both points, in 1966, the JDA Director General pointed out that whilst the JMSDF had no intention to pursue nuclear-powered submarines. Training with US Navy nuclear-powered warships and submarines was invaluable to highlight technical differences and indicate ways to offset their impact on Japanese operations.⁵² In 1967, a wider consensus seemed to have emerged around the fact that ASW training included scenarios whereby the JMSDF would engage an intruding submarine seeking to harass Japanese sea-lanes, with a particular emphasis on protecting Japanese shipping around the country's main maritime approaches and straits.⁵³

By 1970, Nakasone's impetus for a more 'independent' posture that aimed among its objectives at expanding Japanese ASW responsibilities to defend the country's sea-lanes, included opening the door for nuclear-powered submarines.⁵⁴ Whilst he continued to argue in favour of nuclear-powered submarines until 1971, his advocacy did not reflect the JMSDF's view on the matter.⁵⁵ Parliamentary members had come to fully appreciate the potential Soviet submarine threat to Japanese shipping – also known as the

⁴⁹ Ibid..

⁵⁰ National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Cabinet Committee, 21 March 1958; National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, US-Japan Security Treaty Committee, 18 May 1960.

⁵¹ National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Plenary Session, 02 February 1966; National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Financial Committee, 31 August 1966; National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Budget Committee, 15 March 1968; National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Cabinet Committee, 03 March 1969.

⁵² National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Budget Committee, Second Subcommittee, 01 March 1966; National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Science and Technology Special Committee, 02 June 1966.

⁵³ National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Cabinet Committee, 25 May 1967.

⁵⁴ National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Cabinet Committee, 24 April 1970.

⁵⁵ National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Cabinet Committee, 14 May 1971; Hoey, 'The Nixon Doctrine and Nakasone Yasuhiro's Unsuccessful Challenge to Japan's Defense Policy, 1969-1971', *op.cit.*, 67-68.

‘Sokolovsky strategy’ from the Russian author that emphasised this method of warfare.⁵⁶ Similarly, within the Diet, there seemed to be a growing consensus that submarines would be best suited for operations around the Japanese straits to maximise their effectiveness and minimise their limitations vis-à-vis nuclear boats.⁵⁷ The JMSDF’s procurement plans to the mid-1970s show how, initial limited success in securing funding notwithstanding, the navy had been able to secure a steady growth in number of submarines and remain firmly in control of capability requirements (Tables 1 and 2). By the early 1970s, clearly stated missions were still missing. Yet, the Diet’s debates over the role of submarines in national strategy had developed well beyond matters of training the ASW surface force and the JMSDF were in control of how the policy process reflected the aspirations of its leadership.

2. ‘A Good Start under Excellent Management’ (1955-1966)

If parliamentary scrutiny was essential to force clarification about why Japan needed submarines as an integral part of its defence posture, the JMSDF was the driving force behind the development of both the type of capabilities they needed and the type of missions they would perform. Within this process, the JMSDF working interactions with the US Navy was central to kick-start post-war rearmament and develop a relevant professional understanding of the changing character of submarine warfare. The new submarine service came to life at 8:00am on 15 August 1955, when the Japanese naval ensign was raised at the flagstaff of the first post-war submarine, the American-loaned *Mingo* (SS-261). A *Gato* class fleet-type boat originally built in 1943, *Mingo* was renamed *Kuroshio* (SS-501) after the current transporting warm tropical water northwards in the western Pacific Ocean. The following year, the JMSDF included into its annual budget planning a request for the first domestically produced boat, the 1,100-ton *Oyashio* (SS-511), which was eventually commissioned in June 1960.⁵⁸ The Japanese were going to initially prioritise training and education to close the technical and operational gaps, and several men who joined the first crews had previously served on submarines and possessed a working knowledge in submarine warfare.⁵⁹

American assistance and guidance was indispensable in initially addressing the issues faced by the newly established Japanese submarine service.⁶⁰ The commitment of leadership of the US Navy and its

⁵⁶ This strategy is mentioned in Japanese parliamentary debates. Cf. Oren, ‘Military Threat Perception in Post-war Japan’, op. cit., chapter 4.

⁵⁷ National Diet Archives, House of Representatives, Cabinet Committee, 12 May 1970.

⁵⁸ Editorial Department, ‘Kaijōjietai Sensuikanshi’ (海上自衛隊潜水艦史 - History of the JMSDF Submarines), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 2006:10, 16, 20.

⁵⁹ Tatsuo Tsukudo, ‘Kaijōjietaihatsu no Sensuikan “Kuroshio” Kaisōki’ (海上自衛隊初の潜水艦「くろしお」回想記 - Recollections from the First Submarine of the JMSDF, “Kuroshio”), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 1997:5, 102.

⁶⁰ Isaku Okabe, ‘Kaijōjietai no Sensuikan Operēsyon Gojūnen’ (海上自衛隊の潜水艦オペレーション 50年 - Fifty Years of JMSDF’s Submarine Operations), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 2005:7, 90.

submarine force made the task easier. Throughout the second half of 1954, Submarine School Faculty at the US Navy New London Submarine School in Groton, Connecticut held discussions on a variety of sensitive topics, including the removal from the walls of the training facilities of a considerable number of pictures of sinking Japanese merchant ships and warships.⁶¹ Eventually, the decision was to keep them and to explain to the Japanese students that they constituted part of the service's history and were meant in no measure to offend them.⁶² In January 1955, 9 officers and 72 petty officers and sailors, who were to become members of the first crew of *Kuroshio*, arrived in New London and joined the school's training programmes for the following six months. Most of the officers were acquainted with the English language and had been trained in submarine warfare throughout their experience in the Imperial Navy. They were allowed to join the 100th Submarine class and to complete its 24-week programme together with their American colleagues. Other crew members started a few weeks later and completed a Japanese-only 20-week training which was tailored to meet the new service's needs.⁶³

Throughout their stay, both officers and sailors learned standard procedures on the manning of a modern submarine and valuable lessons on the practice of sailors' training. It was in the early days of training of the first post-war crew in the United States that the catchphrase 'know your boat'⁶⁴ entered the vocabulary of the Japanese submarine community.⁶⁵ The achievements of this experience reflected both the conscious decision of the US Navy to support the former foe and the JMSDF's commitment to establish new professional standards. In this regard, it seems no coincidence that the small Japanese contingent responsible for the administration and logistics of the programme included young Lt., Junior Grade, Abe Yūzo, who later became the first Commander, Submarine Force.⁶⁶

In the following months, the investigation of technical issues of modern submarine development was entrusted to a team of 8 former imperial officers, all with expertise in the different areas of submarine-related technology. The interaction with the fast evolving American submarine environment proved to be stimulating, especially in regards to the major changes in the field. This, in turn, highlighted the need to address fundamental questions on the role submarines were to play in Japan's future naval strategy. Such questions, unfortunately, had no real answers in the mid-1950s. Uncertain economic conditions precluded the possibility for the JMSDF to pursue a submarine force designed with specific missions in mind. When asked what sort of submarines the Japanese were planning on building, the leading officer of the technical

⁶¹ Captain John F. O'Connell, US Navy (Ret.), email to the author, 07 October 2007.

⁶² Ibid..

⁶³ Tsukudo, 'Kaijōjietaihatsu no Sensuikan "Kuroshio" Kaisōki', 103.

⁶⁴ *Onore no Kan wo Shire* (己の艦を知れ).

⁶⁵ Okabe, 'Kaijōjietai no Sensuikan Operēsyon Gojūnen', 91.

⁶⁶ *Shireikan* (司令官). Captain John F. O'Connell, US Navy (Ret.), email to the author, 07 October 2007.

group answered that they were looking for a ‘flexible option’, one that could be suitable to deal with both surface and underwater targets.⁶⁷ A flexible design well served the idea that training was of paramount importance for the establishment of the professional standards of the new force whilst future options on the force’s missions were evaluated. With these caveats in mind, an emphasis on underwater performance and a primary orientation for anti-submarine roles seemed to emerge pre-eminently during this first study visit. Five technical areas were the focus of the team’s experience in the United States:

- 1) Developments in the field of electric engines;
- 2) Space ratios between the dimensions of the boat and the propulsion system;
- 3) Design and materiel used for the interiors of the submarine;
- 4) Hull strength;
- 5) Noise reduction measures.⁶⁸

US Navy research programmes on underwater performance caught the eye of the Japanese technicians, as recently found tactical manuals adopted by the JMSDF Command and Staff College in 1958 would suggest.⁶⁹ The American navy had modified several fleet boats and constructed two specialised submarines to conduct tests. The most promising of these experimental boats was *Albacore* (AGSS-569), the first of the specialised submarines. *Albacore* had a very low length-to-beam ratio (210 ½ feet long -64 meters- with a 27 ½ foot beam -8.22 meters-), a shape of a fat cigar (or tear-drop), smooth lines and no wooden deck structure. Though such a shape had been previously discarded because it reduced seaworthiness on the surface, underwater, it reached 30 knots, a speed that made it one of the world’s fastest submarines of the time.⁷⁰ In retrospect, *Albacore* must have left an enduring mark on the Japanese research group and those who followed it afterwards, for many of its technical solutions for underwater speed affected later Japanese tear-drop designs.

The first product of this initial phase of exposure to the American submarine world was the 1,100-ton *Oyashio*, a submarine that reflected the lessons of war-time American fleet submarines. This submarine did not adopt the latest tear-drop technology in that the ambition was to favour the development of domestic know-how in modern submarine shipbuilding.⁷¹ Detailed technical reports on fleet submarines were presented to the Japanese and this data, coupled with the Mitsubishi Kobe dockyards’ detailed study

⁶⁷ Akira Terada, “‘Oyashio’ Kenzō no Omoide” (「おやしお」建造の思い出 – Memories of the Construction of the Construction of “Oyashio”), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 1997:5, 98.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 99.

⁶⁹ Author’s access to JMSDF Command and Staff College internal library, 21 May 2018.

⁷⁰ Norman Polmar, *The American Submarine* (Annapolis, MD: Nautical and Publishing Company of America, 1981), 93.

⁷¹ Kevork, ‘The Revitalisation of Japan’s Submarine Industry’, 71-92.

of *Kuroshio*, laid the foundations of Japan's post-war domestic submarine industry.⁷² *Oyashio* represented a risk-averse solution in technical terms, but its added value rested on the ability to set strong foundations for all pre-tear drop submarines and, more broadly, for the Japanese submarine shipbuilding industry.⁷³ From an operational point of view, regardless of a series of technical limitations, *Oyashio* fulfilled its primary objective to act as testing ground for new generations of Japanese submariners, remaining in service as a training unit until 30 September 1976.⁷⁴

In 1957, Admiral Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), US Navy, wrote about his satisfaction on the steps the Japanese were taking in rebuilding a professional submarine core. In a letter to his close friend Admiral Nomura Kichisaburou, one of the architects of the reestablishment of the post-war navy, Admiral Burke pointed out that:

Because I believe a stronger Navy is one of Japan's greatest needs, I try to watch closely the progress of the Maritime Self-Defence Force. The current effort to begin construction of submarines is most interesting, and this small beginning deserves support. I had the pleasure, last November, of meeting several members of a submarine construction team headed by Rear Admiral Yoshimatsu. The technical knowledge and the thorough preparation of this team leads me to believe that submarine building in Japan is off to a good start under excellent management. Meanwhile, I am sure that the fine crew of the JDS KURUSHIO is accumulating the experience necessary to form the nucleus of a distinguished Submarine Service in Japan's future Navy.⁷⁵

In the following years, the evolution of the JMSDF's submarine force combined extensive sea trials with regular military exchanges with the US Navy. American submarines making port calls at Japanese bases offered an opportunity to update procedures and tactics. Specifically, they offered a convenient means to train larger numbers of Japanese submariners to the manuals in use on American conventional submarines. In 1962, this was the case of the submarine *Cusk* (SS-348), which taught an advanced two-day seminar to approximately thirty JMSDF's officers in the Sasebo naval base.⁷⁶ At that time, the underlying predisposition in allowing the Japanese to study confidential materials somewhat surprised the

⁷² Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: *Oyashio* Gata', 78.

⁷³ Kevork, 'The Revitalisation of Japan's Submarine Industry', 91-92.

⁷⁴ Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: *Oyashio* Gata', 79.

⁷⁵ Admiral Arleigh Burke to Admiral Nomura, 28 February 1957 in Osamu Ishii, Naoki Ono, eds., *Documents on the United States Policy towards Japan. Documents of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States, Volume 2* (Tokyo: Kashiwashobo, 2000), 29-30.

⁷⁶ Captain Rod Watterson, US Navy (Ret.), email to the author, 3 October 2007; 'A History of the USS Cusk and the Loon Missile', <http://www.usscusk.com/history.htm> (accessed on 15 September 2007).

submarine's junior officers. That impression was soon replaced by one of astonishment when during a discussion on the 'Figure of Merit' concept for evaluating sonar effectiveness, a Japanese officer (after requesting permission) took the chalk to teach the class. As one of junior officer present to the events put it, 'it was obvious they had already reviewed the manuals and had a good grasp of the subject matter'.⁷⁷

In 1963 the Japanese added a new layer to their interaction with the US Navy, initiating a foreign training programme with the aim to enhance their seamanship and technical skills. A Japanese submarine would be sent for a few weeks to the US Navy submarine facilities in Hawaii. In spite of the very long journey from Japan to Hawaii, which occupied the majority of the allocated three-month period, the programme became a standard practice and a central element of the Japanese basic curriculum for its submarine force.⁷⁸ In Hawaii, Japanese submarines were assigned to one of the two submarine squadrons based in Pearl Harbour under the supervision of a Submarine Division Commander. Training included a wide spectrum of individual ship exercises such as diving, surfacing, snorkelling, submerged depth control (angles and dangles), damage control drills (fires, flooding), man overboard drills, anchoring, navigational practice. Furthermore, it was likely to include combat exercises like submerged attacks on surface ships, torpedo firing, submerged approaches on submarine targets (either surfaced or snorkelling) and ASW exercises with surface vessels.⁷⁹ Submarine training was conducted in discretion, away from public view and it would be classified as confidential by the US Navy, creating the ideal conditions for the JMSDF to profit the most from such an experience. Throughout the period under examination in this paper, 16 units visited Hawaii, spending some 77-84 days to complete the programme, for a total of 1,255 men (Table 3).⁸⁰

Against this overall background, in the early 1960s, the JMSDF had still to explore affordable options for its submarine force. The American small killer submarine programme seemed to be particularly appealing in this regard.⁸¹ To the US Navy, the Pacific theatre had demonstrated the potential of submarines in a submarine hunter role. In light of growing concerns about the Soviet submarine fleet and the reported wealth of information the Soviet Union had acquired from German U-boats, the US Navy had started experimenting with different kinds of submarines to evaluate alternative approaches to anti-submarine warfare. Small hunter-killer boats (765 tons), also known as K-class, embodied a relatively inexpensive answer to the problem. They would lie at the bottom of the seabed and wait off Soviet ports or in narrow

⁷⁷ Captain Rod Watterson, US Navy (Ret.), email to the author, 3 October 2007.

⁷⁸ Captain Ishibashi Tokuetu, JMSDF, interview with the author, Tokyo, Joint Staff Office, Ministry of Defence, 9 August 2007.

⁷⁹ Captain John F. O'Connell, US Navy (Ret.), email to the author, 07 October 2007.

⁸⁰ JMSDF, *Kaijōjietai Gojū Nenshi – Shiryōhen* (海上自衛隊五十年史、資料編, JMSDF's Fifty Year History – Data, Tokyo: 2003), 238.

⁸¹ Terada, 'Jieikan ni Miru Dezain no Hensen: Sensuikan' (自衛艦に見るデザインの変遷: 潜水艦 - Changes of Design in the JMSDF's fleet: Submarines), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 1982:9, 97.

chokepoints to ambush their preys. They would operate in shallow waters and at slow speed, being primarily equipped with a large passive bow-sonar and four torpedo tubes.⁸² Japanese tests revealed that these boats could be suitable for use around Japanese straits as they were very quiet. However, they had limited endurance and scarce maneuverability, inadequate seaworthiness, and offered no more than modest living conditions for their crews. These limitations severely limited their patrol deployments.

Nonetheless, detailed data available from the US Navy and the advantage they offered in keeping costs to a minimum were primary factors in the decision to procure under the first build-up the *Hayashio* and *Natsuhio* classes, for a total of four boats.⁸³ The advantages in quietness presented by these boats were soon to meet the challenging reality of the rough waters of western Pacific and of the evolving combat systems for submarine warfare. Technically, the narrow space of these submarines prevented them to be refitted with improved anti-submarine detection devices. Logistically, their small size limited adequate storage of food.⁸⁴ Comparative assessments between the submarines *Kuroshio* and *Oyashio* on the one hand, and the smaller *Hayashio* and *Natsuhio* classes on the other, favoured the conclusion that the larger SSK option was more versatile and suitable for the JMSDF.⁸⁵

In 1965, the commissioning of the submarine *Ōshio* (SS-561) underlined the JMSDF firm conviction of the need to focus on larger ocean-going submarines.⁸⁶ The importance of this submarine lay in the fact that it constituted the prototype of the subsequent 4 units of the *Asashio* class.⁸⁷ The experimenting with different types of submarines had empowered the JMSDF with the confidence of aiming for larger, ocean-going submarines that would be deployed around the country's straits to monitor Soviet movements and stand ready to 'hunt' them if need be. Unfortunately, the procurement of this boat came at a moment of substantial financial constraints for the JDA and only one unit was laid down. *Ōshio* featured some improvements compared to previous classes in that the introduction of high tension steel NS46 improved safety depth, its main armament consisted of six 21-inch (533mm) torpedo tubes and the design was integrated with a joystick type diving control system.⁸⁸ Ten years after the first submarine had joined the fleet, submarine policy was no longer a matter of deciding what sort of boats would suit the service the

⁸² Polmar, *The American Submarine*, 85.

⁸³ Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: *Hayashio* Gata' (海上自衛隊の国産潜水艦全タイプ：はやしお型 – All types of JMSDF's Domestic Built Submarines: The *Hayashio* Class), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 1997:5, 80.

⁸⁴ JMSDF, *Kaijōjietai Gojū Nenshi*, 102.

⁸⁵ Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: *Natsuhio* Gata' (海上自衛隊の国産潜水艦全タイプ：なつしお型 – All types of JMSDF's Domestic Built Submarines: The *Natsuhio* Class), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 1997:5, 83.

⁸⁶ Terada, 'Jieikan ni Miru Dezain no Hensen: Sensuikan', 98.

⁸⁷ Vice Admiral Yōji Kōda, JMSDF, interview with the author, Yokosuka, 5 July 2007.

⁸⁸ Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: *Ōshio* Gata' (海上自衛隊の国産潜水艦全タイプ：おおしお型 – All types of JMSDF's Domestic Built Submarines: The *Ōshio* Class), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 1997:5, 83.

best.⁸⁹ The JMSDF knew what type of submarines it wished for its force. It now needed to secure funding and take them beyond the stated mission of training assets for ASW.

The Emergence of the Missions (1966-1976)

During the period between the third build-up plan and the adoption of the NDPO the JMSDF finally found a way to review submarine missions and articulate a relevant strategy. Following the second build-up plan, naval defence gained higher priority and by 1966, the fleet was already on the process of achieving its primary goal to improve its ASW capabilities.⁹⁰ The pennant list totalled some 209 units and included 7 submarines plus the 3 remaining boats of the *Asashio* class under construction. Aware of the need to make a strong case for the fleet, the JMSDF tailored its requests in the third build-up to a less ambitious plan, eventually securing for the first time all its main objectives. Sea-lanes defence was accepted as a primary naval role and, crucially, this included the defence of the country's straits – a mission for which submarines were to play a key part.⁹¹

In crisis scenarios, Japanese shipping was to be organised along two main 'sea route zones',⁹² heading towards southwest and southeast of Japan's principal maritime hubs. The 'southwest route'⁹³ extended through the Ryūkyū Islands and the Nansei Shotō towards the Bashi Channel for about 840 nm; the 'southeast route'⁹⁴ moved across the Ogasawara/Bonin Islands to a point north of Guam for 1,000 nm.⁹⁵ Submarines were to 'patrol' Japanese straits and monitor the movement of Soviet boats. This approach was supported within the ruling party too. As retired admiral Hoshina Zenshiro – a long-standing central figure of the Japanese post-war rearmament – noted, '(...) anti-submarine defences are the most important things to strengthen'.⁹⁶ Such a political endorsement of the JMSDF's programme represented a milestone in the service's development, both in strategic terms and capability build-up.

The new strategic setting marked the end of the financial uncertainties which had previously undermined the development of the submarine force. From 1963 to 1971 a total of nine new units were under construction in the Mitsubishi and the Kawasaki facilities in Kobe. On 1 October 1967, the six units of

⁸⁹ Terada, 'Jieikan ni Miru Dezain no Hensen: Sensuikan', 99.

⁹⁰ JMSDF, *Kaijōjietai Gojū Nenshi*, 30.

⁹¹ *Kaijōkōzūhogo* (海上交通保護).

⁹² *Kōrotai* (航路帯).

⁹³ *Nansei Kōrotai* (南西航路帯).

⁹⁴ *Nantō Kōrotai* (南東航路帯).

⁹⁵ Graham, *Japan's Sea Lane Security*, 101.

⁹⁶ Liberal Democratic Party Security Guarantees Study Committee, *Our Country's Security Guarantees – Interim Report (Draft)*, May 1966, 15 in Osamu Ishii, Naoki Ono, eds., *Documents on the United States Policy towards Japan. Documents related to Diplomatic and Military Matters, Volume 6*, 63.

the submarine force were officially organised in the First Submarine Flotilla,⁹⁷ with its base in Kure. Less than a year later, on March 1968, Yokosuka became the second Japanese submarine base, home-port of the newly formed three boats strong Third Division.⁹⁸ By the time the third build-up plan was on its way to completion in 1971, the submarine force mustered eleven submarines, including the first tear-drop boat. In October 1973, the force's general headquarters were established in Yokosuka. To put the fleet's numbers and organisation in perspective, Italy – which had a formal role for its submarine force in the Mediterranean Sea fielded 9 boats. West Germany included in its pennant list some 11 coastal submarines. None was of comparable capabilities with the new Japanese tear-drop boats.⁹⁹ Three years before the NDPO recognised formal operational missions for submarines, the Japanese silent service had two regional commands, two flotillas, and one training group.¹⁰⁰ This was no target practice force.

Capabilities developments of the previous decade certainly suggested as much. The four units of the *Asashio* class, with the lead boat (*Asashio*, SS-562) commissioned in 1966, largely continued the incremental pace of technological innovation set by *Ōshio*. These submarines used high tension steel NS46, like their predecessors, but were additionally equipped with five-blade screw propellers a centralised control system and, as a result of their larger displacement, an increased weapon load.¹⁰¹ Mastering the increasing complexity of modern submarine technology was no easy task, and the professional standards of the force were evolving together with the shape and the complexity of the service's boats. At times, this evolution resulted in accidents like the collision between the second *Asashio* boats, *Harushio* (SS-563), and the destroyer *Ōi*.¹⁰²

As in previous designs, the Japanese kept a close eye on American innovations in the field, and *Asashio* employed features to improve underwater performance which had been developed for the successful American *Barbel* class SSKs. Though American submarines built on the *Barbel* frame differed from the Japanese *Asashio* class in that they adopted tear-drop hull shapes, the similar displacement made them the benchmark of the submarine production of the day. They embodied the sort of versatile compromise the JMSDF was looking for its own silent service. In 1971, the commissioning of *Uzushio* (SS-566), the first of a class of seven tear-drop boats, projected the Japanese submarine force into a new stage of

⁹⁷ *Dai Ichi Sensui Taigun* (第1潜水隊群).

⁹⁸ *Dai San Sensuitai* (第3潜水隊).

⁹⁹ International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 1971* (London: Routledge for IISS, 1971), 19, 20, 47.

¹⁰⁰ JMSDF, *Kaijōjietai Gojū Nenshi*, 199.

¹⁰¹ Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: *Asashio* Gata' (海上自衛隊の国産潜水艦全タイプ: あさしお型 – All types of JMSDF's Domestic Built Submarines: The *Asashio* Class), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 1997:5, 86; Terada, 'Jieikan ni Miru Dezain no Hensen: Sensuikan', 99.

¹⁰² Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: *Asashio* Gata', 87.

development.¹⁰³ Unlike in the case of earlier submarines, no Japanese technical commission seemed to directly draw on American information in the design process; indeed, from this class of boats forward the Japanese, while preserving a keen interest on American leading innovations in combat systems and sensors, took a more independent course.

From a JMSDF perspective, the reasons for such an endeavour were two-fold. Politically, after the government adoption of the non-nuclear principles, the JMSDF felt that the pursuit of nuclear propulsion would prove too controversial. In fact, whilst not intended to affect directly submarine propulsion systems, the government's approach carried the full weight of what the then Ambassador to the United States Ushiba Nobuhiko defined as a blend of the Japanese rooted aversion to nuclear-related armaments and external fears of suspicious moves that might lead the return of an expansionist/militarist Japan.¹⁰⁴ A deep reservoir of feelings well understood and shared by the JMSDF's leadership. As Chief of Staff, JMSDF (commonly referred to as Chief of Maritime Staff -CMS),¹⁰⁵ Admiral Uchida Kazutomi later noticed, 'I do not know how much consideration was given to the military realities in the Government's adherence to those three principles, but I can definitely say that the Japanese people show little interest in the acquisition of nuclear armaments. (...) I (do not) believe that the Japanese people will soon change their position, and I for one do not look forward to such a change'.¹⁰⁶

Strategically, Japanese submarines served a different calculus from their US Navy counterparts, as their missions were centred on patrolling the straits and generally operating closer to the littoral areas surrounding Japanese shores. Still, the JMSDF's attention to submarine performance to meet the requirements of the larger distances between the different corners of the archipelago, would suggest that the service never completely discarded – at least in principle - the option of introducing under favourable political circumstances the more performing nuclear power plants. Yet, the JMSDF followed a cautious and pragmatic approach to strategic problems, one in which every service man understood that the existence of the JMSDF was essential to the survival of the country, and critical to the security and wealth of its population.¹⁰⁷ Thus, for Japanese submarines to succeed in securing the western end of the Pacific from Soviet submarine operations they had to 'seal' accesses to the open ocean. This approach became even more apparent when Japan regained sovereignty over the peripheral parts of the archipelago (i.e. the Ogasawara Islands in 1968 and the Ryūkyū Islands in 1972).

¹⁰³ Terada, 'Jieikan ni Miru Dezain no Hensen: Sensuikan', 100.

¹⁰⁴ Nobuhiko Ushiba, 'Japan: Her Role in World Affairs', *US Naval War College Review*, Vol. 23, 1971:8, 15-16.

¹⁰⁵ *Kaijōbakuryōchō* (海上幕僚長).

¹⁰⁶ Admiral Kazutomi Uchida, JMSDF (ret.), 'The Rearmament of the Japanese Maritime Forces', *US Naval War College Review*, Vol. 26, 1973:3, 44.

¹⁰⁷ Admiral Kasumi Sugie, JMSDF, *Chakunin ni Saishi Kunji* (着任に際し訓示 –Official Instructions of the Chief of Maritime Staff), Maritime Staff Office, Japan Defence Agency, 7 January 1963.

The submarine *Uzushio* was conceived with these missions in mind and in fact, several preliminary models were tested before the adoption of the final design. Underwater speed was seen as the key factor to counter actively the Soviet underwater threat. Its smooth lines were a stark contrast with previous boats, albeit its silhouette only offered a glance to the qualitative leap achieved by these submarines. High tension steel NS63 was used for the hull structure and the safety depth was further increased to an estimated 300 metres. By means of the larger displacement, *Uzushio* had three deck levels, an unusual feature for conventional submarines which in turn had advantages both on living conditions and on the possibility to accommodate more sophisticated systems and sensors.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, these submarines were equipped with devices which considerably enhanced their operational effectiveness, safety and manoeuvrability such as carbonic acid gas absorbent air cleaners, emergency blow system, trim and depth adjustment automatic controls and automatic direction holder.¹⁰⁹

The *Uzushio* class was a large and sophisticated conventional type of submarine. It was a class of boats which reflected the JMSDF's perceived operational demands and its willingness to keep the option open for eventual upgrades with more powerful propulsion systems – if more favourable policy conditions emerged. This class of boats were an inherent part of the strategy to confront the Soviet Union in the Pacific. These boats were striking especially when compared to their NATO counterparts – notably in Italy and Germany. They displayed features that made them more similar to their larger, nuclear-powered, American counterparts than the diesel killer submarines operated by other NATO partners in Europe. In particular, the bow torpedo tubes were positioned towards the mid-ship section to allow the instalment of a large sonar ZQQ-1 in the bow (upgraded in subsequent units with the improved ZQQ-2 and ZQQ-3 versions).¹¹⁰ They were clearly designed to hunt submarines. This revolutionary breed of submarines proved to be particularly reliable and effective and the last of the class, *Yaeshio* (SS-572) enjoyed service as training unit (ATSS-8005) until August 1996.¹¹¹

Conclusions: Confirming rather than Setting the Tone for Japan's Military Cold War

In 1976, the NDPO established the JMSDF's fleet target goal as approximately to 60 major surface vessels to be organised in 4 escort flotillas to conduct ASW operations, 2 minesweeping units, and some

¹⁰⁸ Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: *Uzushio* Gata' (海上自衛隊の国産潜水艦全タイプ：うずしお型 – All types of JMSDF's Domestic Built Submarines: The *Uzushio* Class), *Sekai no Kansen* 世界の艦船, 1997:5, 88.

¹⁰⁹ Rear Admiral Yōichi Hirama, JMSDF (ret.), 'History of the Japanese Submarine after WWII', *Marines & Navales: Hors Série Sous-marins – Spécial Sous-marin Diesel* (Paris, 2004), accessed at http://bea.hi-ho.ne.jp/hirama/yh_e.html, 05 February 2007.

¹¹⁰ Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai no Kokusan Sensuikan Zentaipu: *Uzushio* Kata', 89; Hirama, 'History of the Japanese Submarine after WWII', http://bea.hi-ho.ne.jp/hirama/yh_e.html.

¹¹¹ Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai Sensuikanshi', 42.

220 aircraft to patrol Japan's sea-lanes and territorial waters, and to hunt eventual hostile submarines. The stated mission of the silent service was officially described as to provide surveillance and defence of Japan's three major straits (Soya, Tsugaru and Tsushima), for which it deemed necessary the acquisition of a minimum of 16 units. In practical terms, the NDPO added to the submarine's inventory only two more units, since with the completion of the fourth build-up the submarine force operated 14 boats.¹¹²

The document explained the operational need to maintain a high level of readiness engaging 2 divisions of submarines – each consisting of 3 boats – for surveillance in each strait. Taking into account the country's physical geography and of the location of the naval bases, 2 divisions could be fielded with only 2 units without affecting performance.¹¹³ This was an important step that recognised the maturing state of the silent service and a recognition of its missions as they had already emerged in the second half of the 1960s. From training targets for ASW operations, submarines had become an inherent part of the JMSDF's sea-based tri-dimensional surveillance system aimed at bottling up the Soviet Pacific fleet (Map 1). This transformation cannot be understood outside the context of, and in a fashion that is disentangled from, the development of the previous two decades.

This leads to three main conclusions. First, there is more to the military history of Japan in the early Cold War than the current narrative of a reluctant rearmament would suggest. Within the constrained political, budgetary, and operational confines of the 1950s and 1960s, the JMSDF proactively sought to develop a strategy that would allow it to meet the Soviet challenge in the Pacific. A limited rearmament represented the framework within which the JMSDF had to develop it. Initial policy setbacks and regular parliamentary oversight informed how the JMSDF refined its plans and sought to build its force beyond the boundaries of coastal defence. Submarines came to play a crucial role in patrolling Japan's main straits for extended periods of time supporting surface and air capabilities optimised for anti-submarine warfare. By the mid-1960s, smaller submarines were dismissed as inadequate, and ocean-going diesel submarines were deemed as a relevant match to train ASW forces and to 'hunt' Soviet submarines. By the beginning of the 1970s, Japan's 'reluctant rearmament' had produced a submarine force that was larger and more capable of those of Italy and Germany within NATO.

This observation about the link between rearmament and strategy leads to a second conclusion. Contrary to what is assumed in scholarly narratives, limited political interest in military affairs did not prevent the JMSDF to engage with the Cold War in the Western Pacific. As the case of the submarines suggests, for

¹¹² Editorial Department, 'Kaijōjietai Sensuikanshi', 42.

¹¹³ Japan Defence Agency, *Defence of Japan 1977*, 64-65.

the JMSDF the Soviet challenge at sea required dedicated attention. In the mid-1950s, submarines were considered as controversial assets that went beyond the spirit of the constitution. Yet, for the JMSDF no adequate defence could do without them and, as a result, its leadership learned how to argue the case for the procurement of these assets. As the initial boats were secured the JMSDF further focused on examining different types of boats and on getting ready to operationally employ capabilities. By the mid-1960s, the Japanese were set on hunter-killer diesel submarines deployable for long periods, and they were on track to technically and organisationally develop the force they felt they needed. This also meant that when in the second half of the 1960s the parliamentary debate raised the issue of the value of pursuing nuclear-powered submarines, the JMSDF expressed an adverse position – which it expressed with the support of JDA officials – that was relevant with its doctrine and procurement.

Last but by no means least, Japanese military agency was informed by ties with US Navy, albeit these acted as a force multiplier to a fundamentally different professional force. The JMSDF were an integral part of the ‘Cold War State’ in Japan in that American assistance was not a passive process of adopting a foreign model. At the outset, the JMSDF submarine force drew crucial benefit from close ties with the US Navy to progress technically and operationally. Yet, such a mentorship should not disregard the fact that the JMSDF’s leadership was very active in developing its own understanding of missions, capabilities, and doctrine. As the US Navy sifted its full attention to nuclear-powered submarines in the second half of the 1950s, the Japanese processed American data and experience to create its own force of conventional boats. The idea to focus on patrolling the Japanese straits emerged as an ideal option, with the choice for conventional boats capable of extended deployments being a solution that set the Japanese apart from both the US Navy and other counterparts within NATO with similar mission requirements.

Former Fleet Submarine Force Commander Vice Admiral Tamura Tsutomu recently noted that the Japanese submarine officers represent an elite within the navy. The training is particularly hard and is carried out in a challenging environment. Such conditions are common to all crew members, regardless of their rank and as a result, submariners develop a strong sense of brotherhood. Japanese submariners –like their foreign colleagues– realise that performance below the level of excellence from even one single crew member are a danger to the entire vessel. As the Admiral put it, the spirit of the Japanese submarine force is encapsulated in the motto ‘mind your duty, find your place’.¹¹⁴ It would seem then, that by pursuing their duty in shielding the Japanese straits the JMSDF’s submarine force found already in the early stages of the Cold War an enduring place in the country’s national defence.

¹¹⁴ *Bun wo Mamotte, Bun wo Tsukusu* (分を守って、分を尽くす). Okabe, ‘Kaijōjietai no Sensuikan Operēsyon Gojūnen’, 95.